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Young Jack Harkaway IN THE LAND OF TIGERS.

By BRACEBRIDGE HEMYNG.



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Young Jack Harkaway IN THE LAND OF TIGERS.

By BRACEBRIDGE HEMYNG,

Author of "Young Jack Harkaway and the Pearl Divers of Ceylon," "Young Jack Harkaway and the Idols of Gold," "Young Jack Harkaway Fighting the Moors," "Mole Among the Mussulmans," etc., etc., etc.

CHAPTER I.

AT BURAPORE IN UPPER BENGAL.

YOUNG JACK HARKAWAY, Harry Girdwood, Mr. Mole and Monday were the guests of Mr. Barclay, the Resident under the British government, also the Deputy Commissioner of the district and chief of the mofussil or native police.

They had obtained an introduction to him in Calcutta.

Their object in coming to India was to hunt tigers.

Jack had a liking for big game and the more dangerous the animals were, the better it pleased him.

Mr. Barclay had a wife and one child, a sweet little girl five years old, named Ella.

They were very comfortable in the Residency, and Jack and Harry were making preparations for their first tiger hunt.

A huge forest exists close to Burapore.

It was reported to be full of tigers, deer and other game.

He had secured the services of an old Shikaree, or hunter, who was called Mustapha.

The latter had gone into the forest to prospect.

So bold were the tigers that a man eater would often venture into the fields, spring upon a native and carry him off to his den.

This was a frequent occurrence.

But all tigers are not man eaters.

These are generally old beasts who are lazy and have lost their teeth; cowardly and sneaking creatures.

All the same they are very much dreaded.

The whole town is aroused and thrown into a state of consternation when one of their number is missed.

Yet the Hindus and Mahometans are afraid of tigers, and always try to get a white man to shoot them.

Harkaway's arrival in Burapore created great excitement.

Two men and a child had lately been carried off, never being seen or heard of again.

Jack and Harry were seated in a tent on the compound or lawn in front of the Residency.

Monday had taken the little girl out for a walk and to play in the fields.

Mr. Mole had not yet risen.

"I hope we shall have some good sport," exclaimed Jack; "this is the land of tigers."

"They say there are scores of them," replied Harry.

"Hundreds, I should imagine."

"How do you feel now you have got rid of Hunston?"

"Splendid; it is great weight off my mind."

"So I should think."

He fully believed that his enemy was dead, for he had left him in Ceylon hanging to a tree.

But he did not know that he had escaped death through the breaking of a bough.

Nor did he realize that Hunston and his accomplice in crime, Martin, were following him to India.

They were already in Calcutta, and by dint of diligent inquiry were fully informed of all his movements.

That he was in Burapore they were well aware, and that he was the guest of Mr. Barclay, the Resident.

This new danger was happily concealed from him. Had he known the fact he would not have been so happy and contented.

Burapore was not a nice or lively place to live in.

The population was exclusively native.

Mr. Barclay, his wife and child, the doctor, Mr. O'Brien, an Irishman, and the Reverend McCormick, Scotch, the missionary, with their wives and families, were the only white men in the place.

They formed a little coterie of their own.

All at once Mr. Mole was seen approaching, wearing a light and airy dressing gown.

He had just had a glass of brandy pawnee to refresh him and give him an appetite for breakfast.

"There's the professor," said Jack; "shall we give him a send off?"

"Do. It will be a lark. Scare him," answered Harry, who was full of mischief.

Jack raised his voice.

"Look out, sir!" he shouted.

"What for?" asked Mole.

"Tigers!"

"Where, in the Lord's name?"

"Close behind! He's going to spring!"

Mole jumped a foot in the air uttering a shrill cry, and looked round. He saw nothing.

Then he knew he had been fooled and was indignant.

"This is too bad of you," he said. "You frightened me pretty near to death. Really, you ought to know yourself better. I am old and can't stand it."

"It will teach you to be cautious. Tigers have been seen here in this very garden."

"Who told you so?"

"Mr. Barclay and my Shikaree, Mustapha."

"Stuff and nonsense—rubbish! I don't believe a word of it! Who's afraid!"

"Poor old Mole is a brave old soul, and plucky old soul is he!" sang Jack.

"But if he saw a wild beast who wanted a feast, how rapidly he would flee!" added Harry.

"By the ten commandments," said Mole, "if you youngsters insult me any more I'll go home."

"Don't leave us, sir. We couldn't exist without you. There would be no fun."

"Behave yourselves then, or I'll carry out my threat."

At this moment Monday came running into the compound terror stricken.

"Oh, sah—oh, Mast' Jack!" he cried.

"What has happened?"

"Golly! it am too dreadful!"

"Explain yourself! Don't keep us in suspense!"

"A tiger came up in the rice field and carry off Missy Ella," said Monday.

"Great Scott! You don't mean to say you have lost the child?" replied Jack.

"She am gone! The little thing was picking the rice and eating it when tiger come up, seized her in his mouf, and toted her off."

"This is awful! What will Mr. and Mrs. Barclay do?"

It was a perplexing question.

They would naturally be crazy with grief at the loss of their darling child.

To make the matter worse she was the only one.

"Don't say a word," continued Jack. "Come with me at once. Did you see which way the tiger went?"

"Right into the forest."

"It rained last night. Can you trace his spore as they call the foot marks?"

"That am the trail?"

"Exactly!"

"Sure! I can do that."

"Jack, shall I go with you?" asked Harry Girdwood.

"One is enough on an expedition of this sort. In the absence of the Shikaree I will only take Monday."

"Mustapha said he would be here about this time."

"I can't wait for him."

"What do you intend to do?"

"Kill the man-eating tiger anyway. He may not have eaten the child."

"Why not?"

"I have heard that they take their prey to their dens. God send I am in time!"

He and Monday hurried away.

They soon got to the rice field, which was not far from the forest.

Here they found the spore.

It led straight into the woodland.

They followed it with the sagacity of a foxhound who has got the scent.

In a short time they came to the forest.

They proceeded cautiously as they entered its gloomy depths.

A well defined trail, used by the wild beasts, guided them.

Not only the tigers were to be dreaded, but the huge boa constrictors that hung from the branches of trees, unloosened their coils and wound round the body of the unwary traveler.

That meant being crushed to death.

They had not proceeded more than a quarter of a mile before they came to a big banyan tree.

Its branches extended for some distance.

In a secluded spot, near the trunk, were some cactuses, in full bloom, and behind them was the tiger's lair.

The brute was sitting on his haunches and behind him was his female, who was licking two cubs like a cat her kittens.

Close by was Ella, Mr. Barclay's daughter.

She was apparently unhurt, but looked frightened.

"Stop!" whispered Jack, "there are two of them."

He and Monday halted.

The little girl's dress was torn, but she did not appear to be injured.

It seemed as if the tiger had taken her clothes in his teeth and carried her that way to his den.

Why he had not killed and eaten her was a mystery.

The poor child was afraid to move.

If she had done so, she might have been instantly killed and torn to pieces.

It was lucky that she kept still.

What to do Jack did not know.

By firing at the tigers he might kill the girl.

It would require consummate marksmanship to avoid doing so.

But he was an excellent shot, and rarely missed his aim.

Monday was also armed with a repeating rifle.

In a low tone, Jack said:

"You take the she tiger, and I will have a shot at the male."

"All right, Massa Jack."

"Aim for the heart; just under the left leg, front."

"I understand, sah," replied Monday.

"For Heaven's sake be careful!"

"This chile no fool, sah! Him know his biz!"

They raised their rifles simultaneously, and both fired together.

Each of the tigers were hit and fell.

Two more shell bullets settled them, causing them to roll over in their death agony.

The child escaped unhurt.

It was a marvelous escape; nearly approaching a miracle.

Rushing forward, Jack seized Ella and held her in his arms.

"My darling girl! Are you hurt?" he asked.

"No, sir," she replied. "The tiger did not bite me."

"Thank God! They cannot hurt you now."

Ella laid her head on his breast and sobbed. She had kept up bravely, but the reaction came.

"Don't cry," he went on; "the danger is past."

"Does pa or mamma know?"

"Not a word. Monday told me of what had happened, and we hastened to save you."

"How kind of you, Mr. Harkaway," answered Ella. "I thought I should have been eaten, only they were playing with the baby cubs. It made me feel so bad."

"I don't wonder at it for a moment. Are you strong enough to walk, my dear?"

"Yes, I think so, though I am trembling."

"Then we will go home. I must kill those cubs first, though. Don't think I am cruel, but they will grow up big, and we want to exterminate the race."

"My papa pays five hundred rupees, government money, for every dead tiger brought to the Residency."

"You shall have the reward to buy yourself a new frock."

"Oh, thank you; how kind you are," said Ella.

"Come on, Monday," continued Jack, drawing his hunter's knife from his belt, "let's to work. Help me and we'll skin those animals. Leave the heads on."

Monday started on the job.

Jack cut the throats of the cubs, and soon the four were skinned. Monday carried the trophies of the chase.

Seeing that Ella was really tired, Jack took her in his arms.

They quitted the forest and were crossing the rice fields, when they were overtaken by Mustapha, the Shikaree.

"Sahib!" he exclaimed, "big game in the forest!"

"I know it," replied Jack; "we have got ahead of you."

Monday displayed the skins.

"Allah be good to us! What is this?" queried Mustapha, astonished.

Jack, in a few words, explained what had happened.

"That is often the case," remarked the Shikaree; "the male tiger will bring his prey home to his den for his family to eat before he touches it himself. You were just in time. What a hunter you are."

"I don't think you can teach me much."

"By the bones of the Prophet, I am sure of that," replied Mustapha in tones of admiration.

They walked together to the town, and in the compound found Mr. and Mrs. Barclay talking to Harry Girdwood and Mole.

Those two had told them all about their child.

As can be readily imagined they were nearly distracted.

When Mrs. Barclay saw Ella she clasped her in her arms and covered her with kisses.

Jack told the father what he had done, and was heartily congratulated.

"I shall never forget the service you have rendered me, Mr. Harkaway," said the Resident.

"Don't mention it," replied Jack.

"Our hopes, our lives are centered on that child. Without her, life would be a blank."

"I am only too glad I was lucky enough to recover her."

Barclay and his wife retired into the house with Ella. The Shikaree, Jack and Harry sat in the tent. Monday was rubbing some saltpeter on the tiger skins to cure them, and Mole was watching him.

"I suppose," said Mole, "that you think you are a first class taxidermist."

"What that, sah? It am big word; hab it stuffed and put in a glass case."

"It is a pity you never had any education, you poor, half witted savage."

"You're in a bad temper this morning, Massa Mole. Got out of bed the wrong way, or else had too much booze."

"Don't be insolent."

"If you speak to me, I've a right to talk back."

"Not at all," replied Mole; "consider the difference in our positions. I am a master. You a servant."

"Me a prince in my own country where I come from; you know that."

"A nigger prince."

"Don't aggravate me," replied Monday. "I pull your leg."

"That is more than you dare do."

"Wait and see. Keep on."

"I despise such black trash as you," said Mole, who had been drinking and was in a highly provocative humor. "What do you amount to? Not to shucks. I wouldn't compare you to a row of pins."

"That shows your want of judgment. You drink too much."

"No, Monday. I take a little occasionally to comfort my stomach. We have biblical authority for that. Timothy did it, why should I not follow his example?"

"Well, I should smile," replied Monday.

"You are going a little too far," cried Mole; "I'll hit you in a minute."

"Come on," said Monday, leaving off his work.

Mr. Mole backed down.

"I didn't mean it," he exclaimed; "shake hands, there is no harm done."

"Give me an apology or you are a downer. You called me a savage."

"You are a very good specimen of one. You adorn the human race. I'll bet on you all the time."

"Very good. Now we fren's again."

Monday resumed his work and Mole took a seat under a tamarind tree.

Before him was a table on which were a glass, a bottle of spirit and water.

He drew a deep sigh of satisfaction and drank. The weather was warm but cloudy. He was in the shade.

Suddenly a remarkable occurrence took place.

Concealed in the boughs of the tree was an enormous boa constrictor which had glided into the compound.

It saw Mole and descended swiftly upon him.

In a moment he was in the coils of the snake.

"Help! Help!" cried Mole.

Jack, followed by Harry and Mustapha, ran out of the tent.

But Monday was in advance of them.

His knife was in his hand.

Advancing to the constrictor, which had Mole on the ground, he slashed at him as if he was a butcher cutting up a sheep or an ox.

At the third cut he broke his back, nearly severing him in half. The reptile uncoiled and wriggled in a squirming way on the ground. Mr. Mole got up, breathing with difficulty.

"You was nearly gone that time, sah," exclaimed Monday.

"I will never call you a savage again. You have acted like a good Christian and a civilized man. My life has been saved by you! I have often seen snakes in my boots, when I have had strange phantasies, but I never expected to have one round me. This is a strange country for serpents and tigers."

"You don't take much stock in it, sir?" remarked Jack.

"How can I be on friendly terms with snakes?"

"This one seemed very fond of you."

"He can keep his love to himself. I have no use for it. Bring me another drink."

Monday did so, and the professor retired into the tent. He was afraid to remain under the tree. There might be more snakes about.

Monday dragged the remains of the boa to a secluded place.

A Hindoo servant came out and threw some sand on the grass to cover up the blood.

This was done by the order of Mr. Barclay, who had seen the affair from a window.

He came to the tent and congratulated Mole.

"This is a day of adventures and escapes," he said.

"It was a narrow shave for me," replied Mole.

"I forgot to tell you about our snakes. You should always be on your guard."

"We will be in future."

"What we most dread is the cobra."

As he spoke a terrible cry arose from Hassan, who was obliterating the blood marks.

"Something has happened to Hassan," said the Resident.

He was a native who could speak English, and there were others in the town.

Mr. Barclay prized him highly.

They all ran out of the hut as quickly as they could.

It was truly a day of adventures.

A bright colored cobra was seen gliding away in the grass.

It had bitten the scyse, Hassan, in the leg.

Monday dispatched it with a blow from a stick, but the mischief was done.

Hassan's blood was poisoned, and nothing could save him.

Doctor O'Brien was hastily sent for, but when he arrived the man was in a state of collapse.

"It's all over with him, bedad!" he exclaimed. "I'd advise you to send for the snake charmer."

"I will do so," replied Mr. Barclay.

"Snakes generally run in couples you know."

"Yes; where there is one you are sure to find another."

Monday stepped forward.

He was always willing to render a service if he could.

"Shall I go, sah?" he asked.

"If you don't mind, my good fellow," replied the Resident; "we may as well make ourselves safe."

"Where shall I go?"

"You know the market place? The natives call it the bazaar—where the shopkeepers sell everything."

"Yes, sah, perfectly well."

"In the bazaar you will find a shop kept by a man of the name of Nourad; it is a kind of general store; he sells all kinds of things, from a diamond to a potato; he also has a servant's registry office."

"What shall I tell him?"

"First, to send Selim, the snake charmer, up here to the Residency; secondly, to instruct the undertaker about burying this unfortunate man Hassan; thirdly, to put a notice in his shop window that I want a servant who can speak the English language."

"All right, sah," replied Monday, who started off for the bazaar.

He had not been long gone before Hassan breathed his last.

His body was covered over with cocoanut matting.

The bazaar was only about ten minutes' walk.

It was now high noon. In the heat of the day there is little business done.

The market place was almost deserted.

Nourad was seated in the front of his shop fanning himself and smoking.

Monday had met him before.

They shook hands together, and Nourad offered him a seat by his side.

As a compliment he invited him to partake of rice, bread and salt.

Monday could not refuse, as it was a custom of the country. After eating he communicated the nature of his business to Nourad.

"Inform his excellency," replied Nourad, "that I will send up the burying man and the snake charmer at once. The servant I will see about as quickly as possible."

As he spoke Selim, the snake killer, entered the shop.

In his hand he held seven snake skins.

He had been busy that morning.

"Salaam," he said, throwing them down on the floor.

Nourad nodded. He bought snake skins to send to Calcutta.

They were made into purses, and some people purchased them as curiosities.

"You've been at work, I perceive," said Nourad.

"The town is full of snakes," replied Selim; "there is a plague of them."

"His excellency, Mr. Barclay, wants to see you at the Residency. Hassan has been bitten."

"I am sorry—my heart grieves; he is my cousin."

"Peace be to his soul!" exclaimed Nourad. "We all have to die, but snake bite is terrible."

"I will go at once," said Selim.

Monday rose, and they went away together.

When they arrived at the deputy commissioner's house the party were still standing on the lawn.

"Show your skill, Selim!" exclaimed Mr. Barclay; "we are invaded by boas and cobras."

"I will soon bring them out, sahib," replied the snake charmer.

He took a flute from his pocket and walked about the lawn, playing soft and sensuous music.

Then he sang a favorite Mohammedan melody.

It was called "Tazar be tazar, now be now."

In a few minutes a large cobra emerged from a hole in the ground. It coiled itself on its tail and swayed its head and body to and fro, keeping time to the music.

A minute afterwards a boa constrictor came down from the tamarind tree.

All hands now set to work.

Mr. Barclay was armed with an axe and he attacked the boa.

With a stick Jack fearlessly went for the cobra.

Both reptiles were speedily annihilated.

Selim continued to play, but no more snakes appeared. He was given a few rupees for his services.

After taking off the skins and cutting about a couple of pounds of meat out of the constrictor, he went away.

"What does he want that for?" asked Jack.

"He will eat it. Like the Chinese, the natives will eat almost anything," replied Mr. Barclay.

"Is it possible?"

"They are very poor, and their appetites are not at all fastidious."

The Resident returned to his office.

He had important business to attend to.

A band of Dacoits or strolling thieves had appeared in the neighborhood.

The police feared an attack on the town.

Mr. Mole was shivering.

"Ugh!" he said. "I can feel the coil of that serpent now. What a narrow escape I had!"

"If he had swallowed you, sir," remarked Jack, "he would have found you rather tough and indigestible."

"Anyway there would have been a very pleasant flavor of whisky about him," observed Harry.

Disgusted at their levity, Mole walked off.

"They have no no respect for gray hairs," he muttered.

CHAPTER II.

THE DACOITS—FOUL PLAY—HUNSTON AT WORK AGAIN.

NOURAD, the shopkeeper in the Burapore bazaar, was a Hadji.

To become a Hadji, an East Indian must take a long, and arduous journey.

There are very few who can afford the time and money to do it.

He was a true Mussulman and had made the pilgrimage to Mecca, in Arabia, on the Red Sea coast, where is the tomb of the Prophet.

This journey made him a holy man in the eyes of his fellow townsmen, who greatly respected him.

He was of frugal habits, made money and saved it.

His wife had been dead some years. He did not seek another.

The only trouble of his life was caused by his son, Ahmed, a young man of twenty, who a year ago ran away from home and had not been seen or heard of since.

Ahmed was of a wild disposition, impatient of control.

He had declared that he was going to seek his fortune, but his father feared he had not found it, or he would have written to or visited him.

Many a night Nourad laid awake wondering what had become of his son.

We all have our troubles in this world and that was Nourad's. After Monday's departure with the snake charmer, he wrote out a card, and put it in his window.

It was to this effect:

"His excellency, the Resident, requires a servant who can speak English."

There was another card in the window which said:

"Two furnished rooms to let. Apply within."

He lived in the shop, had some rooms to spare, and was not above letting them.

Scarcely had he done this, than a young man made his appearance.

"Father!" he exclaimed.

"Ahmed," replied the father.

It was the old man's son.

"Allah be praised! my dear boy, you have returned," cried Nourad, embracing him.

"To see you, but not to stay," replied Ahmed.

"That is bad to hear. What have you been doing since you left your home?"

"No good. I have had no luck. You I can trust, I know. At present I am the leader of a band of Dacoits. They are a dozen in number, and we are camped in the forest."

"The captain of a gang of thieves!"

Nourad held up his hands in despair.

This sad intelligence nearly overcame him.

He had hoped and fondly expected better things of his son.

"What can a man do? He must live somehow."

"You had always a home here with me. Why did you desert it?"

"I am of an adventurous disposition. We have been raiding the country and intend to rob the Residency some night."

"Take care. You will find yourself in the hands of the Mofussil police and be sent to the Andaman Islands, after which I shall never see you again."

"I will look after myself; give me food and water. I must get back to my men," replied Ahmed.

He was supplied with what he wanted.

In vain his father besought him to give up his wild and perilous career.

Ahmed would not consent to do so.

He took his leave; Nourad being almost in tears.

To know that his son was a Dacoit was something terrible to him.

But he was a fatalist.

"The will of Allah be done!" he murmured. "It is Kismet. What will be must be."

He was not left long alone with his bitter thoughts.

Two colored men, dressed as respectable natives of the poorer class, entered.

"You have two rooms to let, I perceive?" exclaimed the older one; "we will rent them."

"What is your trade?" asked Nourad.

"I am a rice buyer from Delhi; this man is my clerk, but as I shall not require him for the present, he thinks of applying for the situation described on the other card in your window."

"At the Residency?"

"Yes, that is it."

"You seem respectable; I will take you. Would you like to see the rooms?"

They consented. Each carried a hand bag which they placed on the floor.

A bargain was soon made and they were given possession, the rent being paid in advance.

Nourad informed them that there was an eating house close by in the bazaar, where they could get their curry and rice and coffee.

After doing this he left them alone together.

They sat down and laughed at one another.

These two men were Hunston and Martin, so cleverly disguised that no one would have recognized them.

A train on the great northern railroad of Bengal had brought them to Burapore and they were installed in the bazaar.

"We are landed," exclaimed Hunston, "and can commence operations against Harkaway!"

"As soon as you like. I am ready," replied Martin.

"We have positive information that he and his party are guests at the Residency."

"No doubt about that."

"The card for a servant is just the very thing for you; lose no time. Go and secure the situation at once before anyone else gets ahead of you."

"What am I to do if I succeed?" asked Martin.

"I have given you a packet of white powder which is an irritant poison."

"Yes. You bought it in Calcutta. I have it in my pocket."

"When you get a chance of doing so unperceived, put it in young Jack's drink, and he will not trouble us any more," continued Hunston.

He smiled like Mephistopheles.

"Let me see you here once a day," he added. "Good luck attend your endeavors."

"You may depend on me to do my best; but really young Jack seems to bear a charmed life."

"Break the charm!" cried Hunston.

They shook hands, and Martin started for the Residency to offer his services as help to Mr. Barclay.

He had a deadly purpose in his mind.

This was nothing more or less than to poison young Jack.

Mr. Barclay was in his office, and after asking a few questions, engaged him.

Nourad had sent him, and he thought that a good enough reference.

The man Ali—that was the name he gave—was quite civil and respectful.

Apparently there was no fault to find with him.

He was told to go among the other servants and start at his work at once.

Young Jack, Harry, Mole and Monday were still in the tent.

Mustapha, the Shikaree, had taken his departure.

A grand tiger hunt had been arranged to take place in the forest next day.

Monday and Mole were to stop at home, as they could not possibly be of any use.

But Jack and Harry looked forward to the coming event with great interest.

Jack had tasted blood, as the hunters say. He had slain his first tiger and wanted to kill some more.

"You fellows," said Mole, "make a great fuss about shooting tigers. To hear you talk anyone would think it was a wonderful thing."

"What is your opinion, sir? I shall be glad to hear from you," replied Jack.

"What is a tiger but an exaggerated overgrown cat?"

"With claws, big mouth, sharp teeth, and powerful paws, that can smash a man's head or limbs."

"Pshaw! It is as easy as rolling off a log to kill one of those!"

"Try it, and I'll bet you will never come out of the forest alive," Jack exclaimed.

"Well, we won't dispute about it; let us have a bottle of claret. My thirst is absolutely unquenchable."

"Is there anything new in that, sir?"

Jack made this remark with a sly glance.

"That is what I call unkind; it is a nasty one. I don't like being snaked at. You never saw me overstep the limit," answered Mole.

There was a chorus of "Oh!" from the young men.

"Massa Mole him nebber drinkee for drunkee. Always drinkee for dry," observed Monday.

"That's so; our colored friend understands me better than you two do."

Mr. Mole touched a hand bell.

Martin came out of the house to attend to the summons.

Some wine was ordered.

"That's the new scyse," said Harry. "Barclay has not been long in getting a servant."

"Labor of all sorts is plentiful and cheap out here," responded Jack.

"The fellow's face reminds me of somebody I have seen somewhere."

"So it does me."

They were puzzled.

Presently Martin returned with bottles and glasses on a silver salver.

He proceeded to draw the corks.

Up his sleeves he held concealed the poison powder.

Jack kept his eyes intently fixed on the new servant.

This somewhat disconcerted Martin.

He poured out the wine, handing a glass to each—leaving Jack to the last.

Then he turned half around and adroitly slipped the poison into the goblet.

Fortunately for Jack, his eyes were keen, and he saw the action.

Martin handed him the glass with a polite bow.

"Drink this yourself, my good man," said Jack; "it is a warm day, and you must be thirsty."

At this proposal Martin turned pale under his darkened skin.

He saw that he had been found out.

To drink the wine was certain death.

"You are very generous, sahib," he replied; "but it is contrary to my religion to drink any fermented liquor. I am a Mahometan."

"Bah! a glass of claret won't hurt you."

"I cannot do it."

"What are you afraid of?"

"I should commit a sin and lose caste."

"Drink, I tell you, unless you want a bullet in your hide!"

Martin was in a desperate state.

How to save himself he did not know.

A sudden idea struck him.

He knew that Harkaway would not drink the wine.

Seizing the glass, which stood on the table, he emptied it on the ground.

"What did you do that for?" cried Jack.

"Because I would not drink," replied Martin.

"You are an impostor. I saw you put something in the glass. Who are you, and where do you come from?"

Martin made no answer.

"He sent here by Nourad, who keeps a shop in the bazaar," said Monday.

"I must see into this," Jack exclaimed.

He took up the glass and examined it.

Clinging to the bottom of it he discovered some grains of the white powder.

It looked a precipitate of arsenic.

"You villain," he cried, "you've been trying to poison me."

Martin was now thoroughly alarmed.

Without a word he took to his heels and ran away.

Drawing his revolver, Jack fired at him, but missed his aim.

The man was fleet of foot and darted away like a hare.

He was out of sight in a minute.

In the street he moderated his pace to avoid attracting attention. Hurriedly he made his way to the bazaar and found Hunston, who was in the room.

The latter was naturally surprised in the extreme to see him back so soon.

"Couldn't you get the situation," he demanded.

"We must leave here!" replied Martin.

"What for?"

In a few words Martin told him all that had happened.

"Curse the luck," said Hunston, "baffled again; do you think Harkaway will come to this place?"

"I am sure he will."

"Where on earth are we to go?"

"That is the question," replied Martin.

"You bungling fool! Why weren't you more careful?"

"Don't call me down! I did my best! Do your dirty work yourself!"

Hunston did not want to lose his friend.

"I was hasty!" he exclaimed. "I apologize and take it back. Will that do?"

"Yes, I am satisfied," replied Martin. "Let us look out for fresh quarters."

They took up their traveling bags and went down-stairs.

In the shop they found Nourad talking excitedly to his son Ahmed.

Instead of returning to his men in the forest he had been drinking an intoxicating beverage called Bang.

This is an ardent spirit made out of rice which soon affects the head.

"Are you going?" asked Nourad, in surprise. "Do not the rooms suit you?"

"No," replied Hunston. "We want larger ones. Where can we go? You are not hurt, as I paid you a week's rent in advance, you know."

"Come with me," said Ahmed, recklessly; "I will give you a tent in the forest."

"What are you?" asked Hunston.

"The leader of a band of Dacoits. Join me and spend a happy life."

Nourad held up his hands.

"Allah! what folly is this?" he said. "Do not believe him, my friends."

"I know what I am talking about," replied Ahmed.

Hunston jumped at the offer.

He would be safer, after what had happened, in the forest than in the town.

"I accept your proposition," he exclaimed.

"Well said," cried Ahmed, "by the beard of the Prophet, you will have no cause to regret your decision."

Then they crossed the town, and went through the rice fields into the forest to join the band of Dacoits.

Only about half an hour elapsed after their departure, when young Jack and Harry Girdwood arrived at Nourad's shop.

"You have a man lodging with you who you sent to the Residency as a servant," said Jack.

"There were two of them," replied Nourad.

"Where are they?"

"Gone. I know not whither."

"This man I was speaking about tried to poison me, for what cause I cannot tell."

"Very sorry, sahib; I cannot help you. They were strangers to me. I had the sign up 'rooms to let.' They took them, paid, and all at once, for no reason apparent to me, they have departed."

"Can you give me no clew to their whereabouts?"

"Unfortunately, sahib, I cannot, for I know nothing about them. How should I, when I never saw them before this day?"

Nourad did not want to betray his son.

However erring he was, he loved him.

He could have stated if he had liked that the strange lodgers had gone into the forest to join the Dacoits.

But he did not.

To do such a thing was against his principle.

"Describe the other man to me," said Jack.

Nourad did so, as well as he was able.

"I can't make it out," exclaimed Jack, as they left the shop. "No one in this little town as far as I know has any interest in my death. What have I done to anyone?"

"Nothing," replied Harry, "it must be Hunston."

"Ridiculous. I left him hanging to a tree in Ceylon."

They walked back to the Residency perplexed and dejected.

In the tent on the lawn they found Mr. Mole and Monday.

"Well, Jack, my boy," said Mole, "have you found that scoundrel who made the attempt on your life?"

"No, sir. He has skipped. I wish I had met him," replied Jack.

"It is a maddening mystery."

"I can't unravel it. Girdwood declares that Hunston is at the back of it."

"It is difficult to believe that, when you were his executioner."

"There is some treachery going on."

"Of that I am sure."

It was a problem they could not solve, and they let the matter drop. The next day the tiger hunt was to take place.

CHAPTER III.

THE TIGER HUNT—JACK IS TAKEN PRISONER BY THE DACOITS.

At an early hour, Mustapha, the old and experienced Shikaree, was at the Residency.

Jack and Harry had already partaken of breakfast and were ready to accompany him to the forest.

"Good sport is in store for you, gentlemen," exclaimed the hunter.

"I have found the spore of six tigers."

"We will give a good account of them," replied Jack.

"There is one danger."

"The Dacoits are in the forest," said Mustapha.

"Will they interfere with us?"

"They will rob and murder anybody they come across. Dacoits have no respect for persons."

"Have you seen them?"

"Yes, sahib; they have a camp. I saw them cooking and eating and hiding in the jungle; I heard them talk."

"What did they say?"

"They spoke about making an attack on the Residency in Burapore. It is a daring scheme."

"So I should say," remarked Jack. "I must inform Mr. Barclay of that fact."

He walked into the house to seek the Deputy Commissioner and put him on his guard.

Harry and the Shikaree awaited his return.

They were joined by Mr. Mole and Monday.

"Good morning," exclaimed Harry. "How do you find yourself, sir?"

"First rate," replied Mole; "fit to fight for my life. I have enjoyed a good night's rest in spite of the prickly heat and the ubiquitous mosquitoes. I had my early cocktail and enjoyed a broiled chicken for breakfast."

"You won't hurt."

"I like to enjoy life; it does not last long."

"You don't owe yourself anything."

"And I don't mean to, as you sing chaffingly sometimes. Isaac Mole is a merry old soul; why shouldn't he be? Throw care to the dogs. Worry kills a man sooner than anything else."

"How are you getting on with your Life of Moses?" asked Harry.

"Splendidly," replied Mole. "Monday is my assistant; I dictate to him."

"He is your amanuensis."

"Precisely. We are on chapter two now. We have got Moses out of the bullrushes, and are dealing with his life in Pharaoh's palace; presently, we shall have him as the leader and champion of the Israelites, when the king hardened his heart and would not let them go out of the land."

"That will be interesting."

"My book, my magnum opus will astonish the world if I live to complete it. Moses—"

"My dear sir, don't let me anticipate. I will read your book when it is published," Harry interrupted.

"But let me tell you. Moses was—"

"I can wait."

"Alas! for the indifference of youth," said Mole; "the young do not care to listen to the voice of instruction."

Just then a large chimpanzee monkey, which was a pet of Mr. Barclay's, made his appearance on the lawn.

He had escaped from his cage while the servant was cleaning it.

Very strong and savage was this monkey, being a fine specimen of its race.

It stood on its hind legs and looked savagely at the professor.

There were not a dozen yards between them.

"Monday," exclaimed Mole, "there's your brother; go and shake hands with him."

"That's more in your line, sir, than mine. There is too much of the monkey about you," replied Monday.

"Don't be insolent."

"I've a right to talk when you start in on me. You keep your mouth shut and I'll keep mine. I'll bet my bottom dollar—"

"You won't have to go far for it."

"Will you keep quiet? I'm bad when I get mad. What I was about to observe, sah, is this—"

"Let me hear it."

"That monkey will go for you before he thinks of me."

Monday was right.

The chimpanzee suddenly made a forward movement and sprang upon Mole's shoulder.

He knocked his straw hat off.

Then he clutched hold of his ears and began to pull them.

It might have gone for his hair if he possessed any worth speaking about.

But Mole was very nearly bald.

The professor was scared almost out of his life.

"Help! Take him off!" he cried. "He's chewing my ears! I shall not have one left directly! Oh, Moses!"

Harry laughed until the tears ran down his cheeks.

It was very funny—in fact, too comical for anything.

"What I tole you?" asked Monday.

"He'll kill me!" said Mole. "Take him off! Will none of you assist me?"

"It's natural selection, sir," replied Harry. "A case of the survival of the fittest or natural affinity."

"Help, I say; kill the beast!"

"That would be a pity; he seems so fond of you."

The monkey gave his ears another pull.

"Ouch!" yelled Mole. "This may be a joke to you, but it is not to me, I can tell you!"

The Shikaree, who was a practical man, as far as animals were concerned, advanced.

He gripped the monkey by the neck, and holding him in his arms, carried him into the house.

It was not long before he was replaced in his cage.

"What I say, sah," observed Monday. "That monkey know him friends! Yah, yah!"

"You've got the grin on me this time," answered Mole.

"I always hab, sah!"

"All the same, I think the ape mistook me for you."

Jack now returned with Mr. Barclay.

"Are you sure you saw the Dacoits in the forest?" said the Resident, addressing Mustapha.

"Yes, sahib," replied the Shikaree.

"Where are they encamped, and how many are they in number?"

"Nearly a score. They are two miles inside the forest, and their leader is Ahmed, the son of Nourad."

"Indeed! He was always a young scamp. I wondered what had become of him!"

"They are going to attack the Residency."

"We shall be prepared for their raid. Perhaps I shall assail them in the jungle, assuming the offensive," replied Mr. Barclay. "You can guide me to their lair."

"Certainly, sahib."

"I will not trouble you to-day, there is no hurry. Mr. Harkaway's tiger hunt must not be interfered with."

"To-morrow?"

"Yes, be on hand."

This settled the question. Jack, Harry and the Shikaree started for the forest.

The Shikaree went first, leading the way.

As they walked through the rice fields on a well trodden path, Harry Girdwood exclaimed: "I can't help thinking that Hunston is at the bottom of this attempt on your life."

"How can that be when he is dead. I hanged him."

"Someone may have come up and cut him down."

"What! in the solitary jungle; don't think it."

"The bough of the tree may have broken, or the rope given way; you can't tell."

"That's so, he knew I was going to Bengal."

"The man has as many lives as they say a cat has; he may be with the Dacoits for all we can tell."

"If I meet him again, I will shoot him."

"That is the only thing to do; it is fearful to live this kind of life. Hunston is a man hunter."

"Yes," replied Jack, "it is a blood feud, a vendetta; he thinks of his brother and is bound to be revenged on me."

"I would kill him like a venomous reptile."

"Just give me the chance."

"You know," continued Harry, "that there was a paragraph in the Calcutta paper, stating that you were going to Burapore and would be the guest of Mr. Barclay?"

"I saw it."

"So, I imagine, did Hunston. He is alive and on your track."

"Do you think so?"

"I feel positive of it," Harry answered.

It was a very probable theory, and Jack felt worried about it, yet he had confidence in himself.

If Hunston was in India he was sure that he could hold his own against him.

Still he was an enemy much to be dreaded, firm, implacable and clever.

When they reached the forest the sun was full, and its shade was a grateful relief to the heat.

All kinds of stately, beautiful trees grew in it, but there was a dense undergrowth.

Vines and cat briars interlaced.

Mustapha was provided with a hatchet, and if he could not get along he cut his way.

After an hour's traveling they heard a terrific roar.

"Tiger," said the Shikaree. "Make ready!"

The young men raised their rifles.

Mustapha was right.

Roused by the noise they made, a magnificent Bengal tiger emerged from its lair.

It sprang into the small open space where they were standing in the sunshine.

Both Jack and Harry fired, but though they hit the beast, they did not kill it.

To hit a tiger is one thing, to destroy it is another.

The Shikaree was in front.

Growling again the huge brute threw itself upon him and bore him to the ground.

There was a horrible sound of the crunching of bones.

"Allah, il Allah!" cried Mustapha.

Jack ran up and placing the muzzle of his gun to the tiger's head, fired a ball into his brain.

That made an end of the beast.

But in its dying agony, it struck Mustapha with its right front paw, and fractured his skull.

The brain protruded and the Shikaree died in an instant.

It was a terribly sudden event.

"By Jove!" exclaimed Jack, "I am awfully sorry for the poor old fellow."

"So am I," replied Harry. "This puts a stop to our day's hunting."

"How are we to get out of the forest without a guide?"

"I guess we can find our way back."

"We may or may not."

"Anyhow, we've got to try and do our level best."

"Look out! Here comes another," said Jack.

He was correct.

A second tiger appeared on the scene.

They set their backs against a tree and fired.

This time they were more successful than they were previously, for the tiger made a leap in the air and fell on his back.

He struggled for a few moments and all was over.

"The woods are full of them," said Harry. "Shall we get back?"

"I've had enough of it," Jack answered. "Let us try and find our way out of this labyrinth."

"It is a difficult thing to do."

"I think we are equal to it."

"Shall we skin the tigers first?" asked Harry.

"They can rest until to-morrow; we will come after them," Jack replied, impatiently.

"Come on then."

"I am ready."

They had not gone far before a third tiger sprang out of the jungle. Jack fired and broke his leg.

This stopped his progress.

Then another one appeared, which alarmed them both.

The Shikaree was dead.

There was no one to help or guide them.

Jack fled in one direction, Harry in another.

After a time Jack stopped.

"Where are you, Harry?" he shouted.

There was no answer.

Harry Girdwood had lost his companion.

Again Jack shouted.

The result was the same.

There was no response.

"Well," said Jack to himself, "this is a nice lookout. We are lost in the forest."

He tried to find the track, but couldn't.

Gallantly he pushed on.

"Harry—Harry!" he cried.

There was no rejoinder whatever.

Where he was going to he did not know.

Still he continued his march, hoping to get to the rice fields.

All at once he heard the sound of voices.

A strange sight met his eyes.

In a clearing right in front of him a dozen or more tents were erected.

Several men were hanging about or sitting down, a fire was burning, and one man was cooking birds that looked like quail, of which there is an abundance in India.

"The Dacoits," said Jack to himself.

He was right in his conjecture.

By a singular accident he had struck their encampment.

Deeming it prudent to beat a retreat, he was about to do so, but was prevented.

A man sprang up out of the jungle and presented his rifle at him.

He was covered.

To fire or to retreat was impossible, for he would have been shot down had he attempted one or the other.

Here was a dilemma.

What was he to do in the emergency which had arisen?

The man, still keeping the drop on him, advanced with a smile on his lips.

His eyes glared in a snake-like manner.

"Your rifle, please, and any other arms you may happen to have about you," he said.

Young Jack knew the voice well.

It was that of his old enemy Hunston, whom he had made so sure was dead.

Blackened and disguised as he was, he also recognized the familiar features.

Powerless to resist, he gave up his rifle, revolver and knife.

"Thank you, Mr. Harkaway," said Hunston. "I suppose you know me!"

"Unfortunately I do," replied Jack.

"It is very kind of you to come and visit me in my forest home, because it saves me the trouble of looking you up in Burapore."

Hunston spoke with sarcastic emphasis.

"Enjoy your triumph; it won't last long," said Jack.

"Why not?"

"The deputy commissioner and his Mofussil police know your band of Dacoits are in the forest."

"Are they after us?"

"Hot foot."

"Who cares? You will be dead before they come!" said Hunston.

"The last time we had the pleasure of meeting you were good enough to hang me."

"Served you right!"

"Thank you! I don't think so."

"Dash it all, man alive, you brought it all on yourself by so relentlessly persecuting me."

"This time I intend to return the compliment."

"My death will be amply avenged."

"I beg to differ with you; at sun down you die; until then you shall be my guest. You shall dine with me; we will see how one of the brave Harkaways can meet his fate."

"I am not afraid of death."

"On the level I can tell you that I am."

"Cowards and bullies always are," replied Jack.

"It will please me to torment you for a time," continued Hunston; "little did I think you would fall into my hands like this."

"I was out tiger hunting. My guide was killed, and unluckily I lost my way."

"Destiny threw you into my path."

"I suppose so."

"You have escaped me several times, but I hold you fast now. Ha, ha!"

He laughed wildly.

Then he chuckled with maniacal glee.

"This is glorious," he added. "I sent Martin as a scythe to the Residency to poison you; he failed, but now you are in my close clutches, Mr. Harkaway."

"Keep on," remarked Jack, carelessly.

"I intend to do so."

"It pleases you and does not hurt me."

"You thought I was dead; the bough was rotten; it broke; I fell to the ground, and knowing your plans, followed you."

"If you want money," said Jack, "name your price."

"I want blood."

"Is that all you care for?"

"Yes, I need the life of a human being, and that is you."

"Bloodthirsty monster, can't I buy you?"

"I am not to be bought," answered Hunston.

"Take a hundred thousand rupees and call it square," Jack said, hoping to make terms with him.

"Not one anna."

He spoke firmly and decisively.

Jack saw that there was no hope for him.

His heart sank and he heaved a deep sigh.

During the brief conversation the sun had become obscured by a heavy cloud.

The sky gradually became darkened.

Very sultry and oppressive was the atmosphere.

A wind rose and stirred the leaves of the trees with a hissing noise.

There was every indication of a coming storm.

This was followed by the rumbling of distant thunder.

"Follow me," said Hunston.

Jack was obliged to do as he was ordered.

Taking him to Ahmed, Hunston exclaimed: "this man is a foe of mine. I have captured him, and he shall hang."

"Make mince meat of him for all I care," replied Ahmed. "Who is he?"

"A rich traveler out here tiger hunting."

"Why not get some money out of him?"

"That would not satisfy me."

Ahmed shrugged his shoulders.

"Do as you please; it does not matter to me," he said with Oriental indifference. "What is a man's life?"

Martin came up and grioned at Jack.

"You have walked into the trap," he observed.

"It would appear so," replied Jack.

"I was sorry you did not like the wine I poured out for you."

"Villain! I wish I had shot you!"

Saying this, Jack sat down on the grass, and looked round him with an air of indifference.

The Dacoits were amusing themselves. Some were playing cards, others throwing dice.

All at once, two of their number who had been hunting in the forest, came into camp, bearing a dead body.

"What is this?" asked Ahmed.

"It is our companion," was the reply. "We left him for a little while, and when we came back we found him strangled."

"Thugs," said Ahmed.

The Thugs in India are a fanatic sect of professional murderers.

It is a part of their religion to go about, seize anyone they meet, put a cord round the neck, and choke him to death.

Everyone is afraid of the Thugs.

"I know the man," continued Ahmed. "I am well acquainted with Abdaram, the leader of the Thugs. I made his acquaintance in Delhi. They will kill anyone; it is their religion. We must keep a sharp lookout for them."

"Are they so dangerous?" asked Hunston.

"They spare nobody."

"How is that?"

"Haven't I told you they are professional murderers. It is their creed," replied Ahmed.

"Not nice people to meet with."

"I should think not."

Abdaram, the chief of the Thugs, was well known in upper Bengal. The whole section dreaded him.

He and his followers had committed many atrocities.

In vain had Mr. Barclay, the commissioner, tried to capture him.

He had been clever enough to elude all his efforts.

The Thugs were not thieves like the Dacoits; murder, was as we have said, a profession with them.

They believed that the human race ought to be depopulated and that for every man they killed, the higher their chance would be of going to paradise.

Abdaram and the half dozen Thugs he had with him lurked in the forests, jungles and rice fields.

They lived from hand to mouth.

Woe to the solitary stranger they came across.

These fanatic Thugs were the curse of upper India.

A large reward was offered by the government for the head of Abdaram.

The storm which had been threatening for some time burst at last.

A vivid flash of lightning was followed by a terrible crash of thunder.

"That's your death knell, Harkaway," said Hunston.

"More possibly yours," replied Jack.

"I don't think so."

"You can't tell; strange things happen."

There was another vivid flash of zig-zag lightning.

It passed close by Hunston and struck him in the eyes.

He uttered a frantic cry.

Raising his arms he groped about unable to see.

Martin grasped him in his arms and placed him on the ground.

In a paroxysm of grief, Hunston cried:

"Oh, God! I am blind—blind!"

It was a melancholy fact.

The lightning had deprived him of his sight.

Retribution had overtaken him.

With great fury the storm continued to rage.

Jack could feel no compassion for Hunston.

The thunder crashed, and the lightning flashed.

Rain began to fall in a deluge with tropical violence.

Martin led Hunston to a tent, which afforded some protection from the weather.

"Who are you? I can't see!" exclaimed Hunston, as he sank down on the ground.

"Your friend Martin," was the rejoinder.

"It is awful to be blind!"

"You may recover your sight."

"I have no hope of it; but you will not allow Harkaway to escape—promise me that."

"What can I do? Now you are stricken in this way it all depends on Ahmed."

"Do something, for Heaven's sake!"

"I will see and speak to him."

"Don't leave me now—stay by me! I can't be left alone! Oh, God! to think that I am blind—blind!"

"It may pass off."

"Do not encourage me with false hopes."

"Keep your spirits up."

"I cannot help being cast down. It is horrible to think this thing should have happened!"

"Are you suffering any pain?"

"None at all. It is simply a case of blank—everything is vacancy! I can hear your voice but I cannot see you."

"I am awfully sorry for you."

"It's a great misfortune," said Hunston; "yet you will stick to me?"

"I will, to the last!"

"Go to Ahmed and tell him to shoot or hang young Harkaway. It will be some small comfort to me to know that he is dead."

"There is no hurry. I will attend to you."

"My eyes! They begin to burn!"

Seeing that the pain was coming on, Martin produced some oil which he applied to Hunston's eyes.

In the meantime Jack had not been idle.

He saw that his enemy had met with a terrible affliction.

Hunston was completely disabled.

It was out of his power to do any more harm.

Whatever he did would be done through Martin as an agent.

The storm passed off, rolling rapidly to the west.

"You are the head of this band of Dacoits," said Jack.

"The sole master; what of it?" replied Ahmed.

"Your object is to get money and live a life of ease."

"Why else do we rob? We Hindoos hate the English Raj. They have conquered and enslaved us. We were civilized centuries before they came to this country."

"You do not love the English rule."

"Every Indian distrusts it."

"Never mind that," said Jack; "my enemy has been struck blind by the lightning. You have no enmity towards me."

"Why should I? Did I ever see you before in my life?" answered the captain of the Dacoits.

"That is reasonable."

"Now we will talk. What have you to say or propose?"

"My enemy, Hunston, has been blinded by the lightning. He is with his friend Martin in the tent. Have you any interest in keeping me a prisoner?"

"I hear you are rich."

"Oh, if it is a question of money, I can easily settle your demand. How much do you want?"

"How much can you pay?"

"Name your own price. I can't buy and sell too," replied Jack.

"Ten thousand rupees."

"You shall have it. Let one of your men guide me out of the forest and accompany me to the Residency. I will go to the bank in Burapore and give him the money in five minutes."

"Agreed! By Allah! it is a bargain!"

Ahmed beckoned to one of his men.

He was a tall, stalwart Sikh, born in the mountains.

"Shagpat," the Dacoit leader said, "you will go with the sahib to

Burapore. I have agreed to ransom him. He will give you money, which you are to bring to me."

The man nodded his head.

Plaintive cries came from the tent in which Hunston was.

"Blind—blind!" he said in a lachrymose tone.

Jack and Shagpat left the camp together.

The former was only too glad to make his escape.

He had made sure that his doom was sealed.

But Hunston was foiled again.

They had not gone far before they met Harry Girdwood.

He had been wandering about looking for Jack.

"By Jove! I am glad!" exclaimed Harry. "We missed one another. Where have you been?"

"In the Dacoits' camp," replied Jack.

"Were you captured?"

"Yes, by Hunston, who is one of the band with Martin. The latter is the one who tried to poison me."

"I told you Hunston was not dead."

"He is worse than that now."

"How?" ejaculated Harry.

"Just now a flash of lightning, when the storm was at its height, struck him blind."

"That is a dispensation of Providence."

"Certainly; retribution has overtaken him."

"You will be troubled by him no more."

"I sincerely hope not," replied Jack.

"How did you manage to get away from the Dacoits?"

"By promising their leader Ahmed a sum of money. This man, Shagpat, is going with me to Burapore to receive it."

"Has he no fear of the police?"

"I promised not to betray him."

"The commissioner will be after these rascals," said Harry; "I heard him remark that he would not tolerate their presence in his district."

"They will fight hard. All are well armed and they are a desperate looking set of characters."

"Mr. Barclay and his Mofussils will make short work of them."

"I trust he will; all the same I must keep my word as a gentleman and a man of honor, and give Ahmed the money as arranged."

"I wouldn't. Why should you keep faith with a thief?"

"My word is as good as my bond," said Jack. "But I have to tell you another thing."

"What is that?" Harry inquired.

"There are Thugs in the forest."

"I have heard of the horrible fanatic stranglers."

"They are under the leadership, I am told, of the well-known Abdaram; one of the Dacoits was killed by them this morning."

"Barclay will have his hands full."

"You are right. What with tigers, Dacoits and terrible Thugs, this is a lively neighborhood to live in."

They had been walking along all the time they were talking.

Shagpat was in advance as guide.

He well knew his way through the intricacies and mazes of the vast forest.

Suddenly they were confronted by a body of twenty men.

It was a posse of police, commanded by the Resident in person.

Mr. Barclay shook hands with the young men.

Jack told him all that had happened.

He also informed him of the presence of the Thugs.

"Seize that man," said the Resident, pointing to Shagpat; "one of you take him back to Burapore and put him in the lock-up house."

Shagpat was instantly disarmed and made a prisoner.

He was promptly marched off.

"But, my dear sir," remonstrated Jack, "I have promised to pay for my liberty."

"Allow me to have my way in this matter," replied Mr. Barclay.

"You shall not give this rascal Ahmed a penny!"

"It is a breach of faith."

"You have too fine a sense of honor. He will not want it, anyway."

"How is that?"

"If you will conduct me to his camp, we will take him by surprise and exterminate the whole band."

"Bravo," said Jack; "that is a good determination."

"If we don't kill these pests they will us."

"Sure!"

"It is a matter of necessity. I should be neglecting my duty as a magistrate of this district, if I did not have a shy at them. You know they have threatened to attack the Residency, and they have been raiding the country all round."

"A bad lot."

"I should rather think so; discharged convicts, every one of them," answered Mr. Barclay.

"It will not take me long to show you where they are."

"How far off?"

"About a mile," replied Jack.

"Lead the way; let us march at once!"

The party started; Jack going ahead.

He was betraying Ahmed; but after the Resident's arguments he reconciled it with his conscience.

The Dacoits were enemies of the human race.

It was only right and proper that they should be wiped out of existence.

Jack was unarmed.

Therefore he could take no part in the coming fight.

In half an hour they arrived at the Dacoits' camp.

The bandits were seated on the ground eating their dinner.

Mr. Barclay threw his men into line.

Their movements were so noiseless as to arouse no attention.

"Cover your men and fire," said the Resident.

In a moment a volley was discharged.

More than half the Dacoits rolled over killed or wounded.

Ahmed escaped unhurt and fled into the forest.

The remainder seized their rifles and returned the fire.

But they were soon shot down.

Only two of the Mofussil police were killed.

It was a skillfully planned and easy victory.

The police entered the camp. To the victor belongs the spoils.

Disregarding the dead bodies, they eat the dinner which the Dacoits had just begun.

Mr. Barclay examined the tents.

One was found filled with stolen property.

Jack accompanied him in his search.

To his surprise he could see nothing of Hunston or Martin.

What had become of them?

That was the question.

It was a most remarkable disappearance.

Being blind, Hunston must have been led away by Martin.

"My enemy has vanished," said Jack.

"And I can see nothing of Ahmed," replied Mr. Barclay, who had been examining the bodies of the slain.

"Do you know him?"

"I am acquainted with every one in Burapore."

The expedition had proved a great success.

After a brief halt Mr. Barclay marched his men back.

Jack and Harry accompanied him.

Their minds were perplexed about Hunston.

What chance had they of finding him?

Where he had gone was a mystery.

CHAPTER IV.

THE HERMIT OF THE FOREST—THE MIRACULOUS WELL—A MEETING WITH THE THUGS.

DIRECTLY the firing began against the Dacoits, Martin roused Hunston.

The latter was nearly in a state of collapse.

He was suffering no pain, but all he could say was, "blind, I am blind!"

Guided by Martin they glided away into the depths of the forest. Fortunately they escaped the bullets that were flying about.

"Where are we going?" asked Hunston, who clung to the arm of his companion.

"I don't know," replied Martin.

"What has happened? I heard shots fired."

"The Dacoits are attacked by the Mofussil police. I imagined it was best to clear out."

"In that case you were right," said Hunston; "don't leave me; stay by me; don't let me die in the wilderness."

"I will stick to you to the last."

"Swear it!"

"I do or my soul, and I will never leave you, because you have been good to me and I am grateful."

"Thank you. I have money. You shall never forget it. Oh! how horrible it is to be blind!"

"You may recover your sight."

"I fear not. Whenever I attack Harkaway I get worsted. Even the elements seem to fight against me."

"You will not give up the game?"

"Not as long as I live; but my sight. Oh, God!"

Hunston burst into a paroxysm of grief.

He was completely broken up.

They wandered through the forest for at least an hour.

Nothing interfered to disturb their progress.

The tigers were in their lairs and the snakes did not show themselves.

All at once they came in sight of a rudely built hut, outside of which an elderly man was sitting.

He had long gray hair and a beard.

His appearance was patriarchal; he was attenuated, almost skeletal, and his countenance was sad and pensive.

The hut was sheltered from the wind by a rock which jutted from the ground to a height of twenty feet.

Out of this rock came some water which ran away in a tiny stream into the forest.

Huge trees on all sides gave a grateful shade from the rays of the tropical sun.

Advancing to the old man, Martin said: "Will you give us shelter for a time? We are willing to pay for the accommodation."

"Money is of no use to me," was the reply. "I am a hermit. For many years I have shunned my kind. I live on roots and such fruit, berries and nuts, as I can find in the forest. To my small store and a part of my cabin you are welcome."

"I thank you," exclaimed Martin.

"Whence come you?"

"From Burapore. We were hunting in this forest and got captured by Dacoits. We made our escape and are lost."

"What is the matter with your friend?"

"A terrible misfortune happened to him in the recent storm. The lightning blinded him."

Hunston was standing still, looking the picture of despair.

The hermit walked up to him and examined his eyes.

"I can cure him in a few days," he exclaimed.

"What is that you say?" asked Hunston.

"Your sight shall be restored by Allah; it is indeed fortunate you met with me."

Every nerve in the man's body quivered with delight.

He was to see again.

What an infinite blessing!

But could the old man perform what he promised?

That remained to be seen.

"Are you a doctor?" asked Hunston.

"No," rejoined the hermit. "I lay no claim to a knowledge of the secrets of medicine. Water comes out of a rock close by; it has miraculous powers. Some time ago I was struck with moon blindness; the moon was at its full; I slept in open air; when I awoke I could not see. Groping my way to the rock I bathed my eyes in the water, and in a short time my sight came back."

"My case is different."

"Not so. You are not burnt; the sense of sight is simply in abeyance."

"I wish I could think so."

"You have had a narrow escape; come and try the remedy. There is iron in this water; it will cure you."

"I will do so with pleasure."

"While you are using the water you must pray to Divine Providence for help. There is efficacy in prayer."

The hermit led Hunston to the rock.

He made him kneel down and put his hand into a small pool in which the water had collected.

For many years Hunston had not prayed to Heaven.

He did so now, however, earnestly and fervently.

For nearly an hour he kept on dashing the water against his eyes.

It was icy cold.

The effect was to numb them.

"That will do," said the hermit.

"Is one application enough?" said Hunston, rising.

"It was with me. If not, you must keep on. Enter my hut; sleep on my bed of dry grass. We shall see what will come of it."

He conducted Hunston to the hut and showed him where to rest.

Overcome with fatigue and emotion, he soon fell asleep.

The hermit offered Martin some roots and fruit.

He found them palatable and satisfying.

"I have not tasted meat or bread for years," remarked the hermit.

"What made you take to this life?" asked Martin.

"Grief at the death of my wife. I was a native of Burapore, employed as an interpreter at the Residency."

"I don't think it would suit me."

The hermit smiled.

"Use is second nature," he replied. "I have no cares or responsibilities. Men and women are nothing to me. The wild denizens of the forest are my friends."

"Are you not afraid of them?"

"They know me; every afternoon tigers and elephants come to drink at my well."

"And they do not touch you?"

"They harm me not. I talk to them and stroke them with my hand."

As he spoke a pair of tigers stepped into the open space and went to the water basin.

Martin ran into the hut dreadfully alarmed.

He was afraid the ferocious brutes would spring upon him.

Looking out of the doorway he saw them go to the well and drink the limpid water.

They did not attempt to injure the old man, who spoke to them in Hindostanee.

As he had asserted, they allowed him to stroke them, and purred like cats as he did so.

They rolled on their backs and gambolled in the sun, after which they went away.

"Wonderful," ejaculated Martin as he emerged from the hut.

"I do as I like with them; they come every day," said the hermit.

The afternoon passed rapidly.

Before the sun went down, Hunston awoke.

A cry of joy broke from his lips.

"I can see," he cried. "Thank the Lord my eyes are all right again."

"What did I tell you," said the hermit.

"It is a miracle; it was fortunate that I came across you."

Hunston attributed his cure to the water which came out of the rock.

But he would have recovered his sight if he had not used it.

The lightning had only temporarily suspended the power of the optic nerve.

He was nearly beside himself with delight.

It was now supper time. The hermit spread a large palm leaf on the grass to serve as a table cloth.

On it he placed some tamarinds, pine apples and cachoo nuts, with a knife, and invited his guests to help themselves.

They did not hesitate to do so.

"Young Jack thinks I am done for this time," remarked Hunston.

"My recovery will be a surprise to him."

"A fair knock-out," replied Martin, grinning; "a regular corker."

"It won't be long before I am on his track again. Mr. Hermit—I don't know your name."

"I have almost forgotten it myself. No matter," was the reply.

"May I ask you a question?"

"Certainly; do so by all means. If I can answer it I will."

"Are you aware that the Thugs, as the professional stranglers are called, are in the forest?"

"Yes; I know it well. They are not far from here."

"Indeed!"

"Abdaram, the leader, is an old friend of mine. He has six men with him. I cured him of the fever last spring; he is coming here today."

Hunston and Martin looked alarmed.

"Will he injure us?" asked Hunston.

"No; you are under my protection."

The two men breathed a sigh of relief.

"Why do the Thugs act in such a cruel manner?" continued Hunston.

"It is their religion. They believe that the more people they strangle the higher the place they will have in Heaven."

"It is a strange creed."

"As I understand it," continued the hermit, "they hold that the population is increasing too fast. They are all woman haters. The number of people produces crime and poverty. It is their duty to kill."

"They are enemies of the human race," said Hunston.

"Exactly, but, as they think, for the good of the race."

Just then a tall, well-built man of middle age made his appearance. Slung over his shoulder he carried a short silken cord.

This denoted that he was one of the strangling Thugs.

"Abdaram," cried the hermit, "welcome."

"Salutation," answered the famous leader. "Who are these strangers?"

"Friends of mine. We have eaten together. Harm them not."

"On one condition."

"Name it," said Hunston.

"That you join my band."

"I have no objection."

"It is a compact. Your lives are safe. Had you refused I should have strangled you, for I am a Thug," replied Abdaram.

Hunston and Martin were quite willing to become Thugs. It might help them to end the campaign against Harkaway.

At present they were free lances.

They had lost their good friends, the Dacoits.

It was impossible for them to return to Burapore.

"I have just killed a man in the forest," said Abdaram; "he is one of the white sahibs. I saw him at the head of a party of police. They halted to rest; he walked away with his gun following the spore of a tiger. I waited for him behind a tamarind tree. When he came near me I sprang upon him. The cord was soon round his neck."

"Describe him," said Martin, "and perhaps I can tell you who he is."

Abdaram did so.

"Your victim must be Mr. Barclay, the Resident and Deputy Commissioner of Burapore," added Martin.

Hunston was hoping it was young Jack.

Then his debt of vengeance would have been paid.

"These police had been fighting the Dacoits," continued Abdaram, "killing all except Ahmed, who fled and joined me."

This was no news to Hunston except that Ahmed, the son of Nourad, had become a Thug.

Hunston now gave an account of himself and Martin, explaining how and why they came to Burapore, and subsequently to the forest. The descent from a Dacoit to a Thug was very easy.

There was not much difference between them.

It was only a question of degree.

"You were born to be Thugs, for you have the death dealing instinct in you," exclaimed Abdaram. "I am glad you are acquainted with Ahmed. You will be worthy members of my band. I can see that, by Allah!"

"We will do all we can to serve you and obey your orders."

"This enemy of yours, the Sahib Harkaway, shall not live long," added Abdaram.

"You intend to stay here?"

"Yes; we shall be some weeks in the forest."

After some further conversation the three men took their leave of the hermit.

Hunston and Martin accompanied the Thug.

They embarked on a new career.

CHAPTER V.

THE DISCOVERY OF MR. BARCLAY'S MURDER—A NEW RESIDENT—THE GOVERNMENT REWARD FOR THE APPREHENSION OF THE THUGS—JACK'S DETERMINATION.

As Abdaram had stated, Mr. Barclay halted his force in the forest for a brief rest.

Jack and Harry were tired and glad to take a siesta under a tree. Mr. Barclay was vigorous. Nothing ever seemed to fatigue him. Seeing what he thought was the spore of a tiger, he announced his intention of going after it.

The young men wished him good sport.

"I'm dead beat," said Jack, "or I would go with you."

"This isn't my first tiger by a long way," replied the Resident. "I have killed a score since I came out to this place."

He disappeared in the jungle, and the young men went to sleep. In a couple of hours they awoke.

Nothing was to be seen of the Resident.

"I wonder what has become of Mr. Barclay?" said Jack.

"Perhaps he has met with an accident," replied Harry.

"We had best go in search of him."

"That is also my opinion. I hope he is all right."

They started in search of the missing commissioner.

Both had sad misgivings as to his fate, which they could neither conceal from themselves nor account for.

After walking half a mile they came to a tamarind tree.

Here they made a ghastly discovery.

It was the spot where Abdaram had committed his diabolical crime.

The strangled body of Mr. Barclay was lying with the black and swollen face upturned to the sun.

It was an awful sight.

The cord had left the mark of strangulation round the neck.

"This is the work of Thugs," said Jack.

"No doubt of that," replied Harry.

"Poor fellow, he was so kind and gentle."

"Ay! A general favorite with everybody."

"I shall have to break the news to his widow," continued Jack; "not a pleasant task."

"The news of his death will kill her."

They hastened back to the detachment of police and gave the alarm.

General grief, consternation and indignation was manifested.

Four men made a litter of boughs. Jack guided them to the place, and the body was brought in.

Then a melancholy procession started for Burapore.

The corpse was not taken to the Residency, but to the undertaker's shop.

Jack thought that the disfigured, distorted expression of the features would shock Mrs. Barclay too much.

When they reached the Residency they found Mr. Mole and Monday in the tent engaged in playing the highly interesting game of cards known as pinochle.

To them they related the adventures of that eventful day.

Both were greatly concerned to hear of the melancholy fate of Mr. Barclay.

But they were not at all troubled about Hunston having been stricken blind.

Not for a moment did they think that he had recovered his sight.

They imagined they had done with him forever.

Summoning up all his courage Jack walked towards the house, outside of which Mrs. Barclay was gathering some roses for her table.

"Have you seen anything of my husband?" she asked.

"I am sorry to have to inform you," replied Jack, "that he has met with an accident."

She uttered a far-reaching shriek.

"My God!" she cried, "he is dead. I know it. I can read it in your face. The Dacoits have killed him!"

"He was murdered by Thugs, but I will avenge him."

"Of what use is that to me? Oh, my husband, my dear, dear husband!"

She clasped her hands together in an agony of frenzied grief.

Jack led her into the house, placed her on a lounge and called her maid.

She wept bitterly, and like Rachel, mourning for her children, refused to be comforted.

The funeral, as is usual in hot countries, took place the next day.

Mrs. Barclay had friends in Calcutta, and at once departed for that city with her little girl, Ella, after the mournful ceremony.

The news was telegraphed to the Governor-General, who promptly dispatched another Resident.

This was a gentleman named Bodwin, who was energetic and experienced.

At the same time they were informed that the Bengal government had offered a reward of a thousand pounds sterling for the capture or destruction of the Thugs.

Jack and his friends remained at the Residency until the arrival of Mr. Bodwin.

He was a single man, and invited them to prolong their stay, stating that he should be glad of their company.

"I will do so on one condition," said Jack.

"What is that?" asked Bodwin.

"Just this—that you allow me to earn the reward by exterminating these atrocious Thugs."

"I shall be very glad of your assistance, but I fear you will not find it so easy a job as you fancy."

"I am willing to undertake it."

"Do so. Start when you like."

"To-morrow. I never let the grass grow under my feet," exclaimed Jack.

"You are business all the time," said Mr. Bodwin, smiling. "To the backbone," was Jack's reply.

CHAPTER VI.

THE UPRISING IN BURAPORE.

"My word!" said Mr. Mole, "there's going to be a storm!"

Mole was looking out the window of the Residency at Burapore. It was somewhat late on the evening of the arrival of the new Resident, Mr. Bodwin.

Young Jack Harkaway, fully determined to start on his mission against the Thugs next day, was now amusing himself at a game of dominoes with Harry Girdwood.

Mole had been industriously scribbling away on his history of Moses. Where Monday was nobody knew.

Jack's faithful servant had vanished early in the afternoon.

"Shouldn't wonder if we had another turn of thunder and lightning," replied Jack, carelessly.

"I don't like the looks of things at all," continued Mole with his head out of the window.

"Then don't look at them," said Harry. "Domino, Jack!"

"That's sound advice, Mole," said Jack, turning over the dominoes for a new game. "Get back to your history of Moses and let the elements alone."

"Yes; if they will let us alone, dear boy."

"Let it rain—who cares."

"It ain't the rain."

"Let it thunder then."

"Tain't the thunder."

"Let it lightning."

"Tain't neither thunder nor lightning."

"Then if it ain't thunder what in thunder is it that's worrying you, professor?"

"Strange sounds are in the air."

"I hear the wind murmuring."

"It ain't the wind."

"Good heavens, you make me tired!" cried Jack. "If it ain't the wind, nor the thunder, nor the lightning, then what is it that sets so heavy on your mind?"

Mole closed the window.

He turned upon them with a serious air.

"The sound you hear, dear boy, is the murmur of the populace."

Harry flung down his dominoes and jumped up.

"What in the world do you mean, Mole?" he cried.

"Yes; speak up. Tell us all you know!" exclaimed Jack.

"Really, there is nothing to tell, for I don't know anything beyond the fact that the sounds we hear are the sounds of the conglomeration of ejaculation from many human beings in a state of indignation, which throws me into a condition of consternation, lest roused to exasperation these coffee colored individuals of Burapore may resort to annihilation—"

"Have done! Have done!" cried Jack, thrusting his fingers into his ears. "Professor, you give me a pain!"

"All the same there is something in what he says," called Harry, who had his head out of the open window.

This was now made very evident.

The distant murmur of many voices could be distinctly heard.

Jack looked out of the window also.

The street in front of the Residency was entirely deserted.

A storm was certainly approaching, but the storm Mole feared was of another kind.

"What's to be done?" cried Jack.

"I do wish Monday would return," said Harry.

"What I'm going to do is to finish this chapter," said Mole, thrusting his wooden leg under the table, and taking up the pen. I have Moses in a most interesting situation, and to leave him now is something I can't do even if the whole of Burapore should rise up against me—in short I won't."

"We must communicate with Mr. Bodwin at once," cried Jack.

He pulled the bell cord.

A native servant appeared.

"Inform his Honor, the Resident, that I wish to speak with him without delay," said Jack.

"Yes, sahib."

"Return and let me know when I can be received."

"Yes, sahib."

The man made a low salaam and withdrew.

In a few minutes Mr. Bodwin came hurrying into the room.

He was very pale and appeared to be greatly agitated.

"I suppose you have heard the news, gentlemen!" he exclaimed, cautiously closing the door.

"We have heard no news," replied Jack; "but we can hear a noise in the distance which alarms us—we thought you ought to know."

"Unfortunately I know only too well what it means."

"An uprising?"

"Yes."

"We feared as much."

"A native servant long attached to Mr. Barclay had just come in to warn me when your message came."

"And what is his report?"

"There is a general uprising in the western quarter of the city."

"And for what reason?"

"It is directed against me. Unfortunately I attempted to collect certain obnoxious taxes in the City of Chowsayal where I was three

years Resident. The people here believe that I will do the same here, and are determined to drive me from Burapore, perhaps murder me. It is a very serious affair."

"Serious! I should say so!" cried Jack. "But this must be the work of some enemy."

"It is!"

"But who?"

"Ahmed, the leader of the gang of Dacoits, broken up by Mr. Barclay."

"Ah, I know him only too well!"

"He has been moving about the city in disguise talking to the natives and rousing them against me! Hark! Don't you hear the firing? The uprising has begun! The native police will never be able to stand up against these people, if indeed they do not desert and join them!"

"What is to be done?" cried Jack.

"Yes, tell us what to do and we will do it," added Harry.

Even Mole was aroused.

He hastily rolled up his manuscript, and thrusting it in his pocket announced himself ready for any emergency.

"We can only barricade ourselves here and defend the Residency the best we are able," replied Mr. Bodwin; "I see no other way."

"But why not escape while there is time?"

"The time is past! Spies are watching the house on all sides!"

"Here's a state of things!" cried Jack; "but if there is any fighting to be done, we are with you, my dear sir!"

"That I know," replied Mr. Bodwin. "Hark! They are coming now!"

All flew to the window and looked out.

The firing had now ceased.

But the murmur of the populace could be heard more distinctly than ever.

As they peered out they saw a large crowd come pouring down the street which led to the Residency.

They were armed with long knives, old scimitars and clubs.

A few had guns, but the greater part carried no weapon of any kind.

They raised a wild shout as they neared the Residency, and then began to spread themselves with the evident intention of surrounding the house.

"I'm afraid my hour has come," groaned Mr. Bodwin. "I know I am very unpopular among these people. They will not spare me; it is of no use to hope for it."

"But are we going to stay here to be slaughtered like sheep?" cried Mole. "I, for one, say no!"

"We must make some move," said Jack, as he and Harry seized their guns. "Are the doors and windows on the lower floor closed and fastened?"

"I gave orders to that effect," said Mr. Bodwin, "but I have no confidence in these natives."

Jack was disgusted.

The manner in which the Resident seemed inclined to "lie down" to the situation, was not at all to his taste.

"Follow me!" he cried.

He led the way down-stairs.

Here it was discovered that every servant had vanished.

The windows were all closed and secured by heavy shutters.

But the front door stood wide open, as though inviting the infuriated crowd, which was now pouring down upon the Residency, to enter at their pleasure.

Jack hastily secured it.

Not a moment too soon, either.

The next they knew the mob was all about the house.

They howled and yelled like demons.

Great stones were hurled against the windows.

They beat upon the door with clubs.

"I am greatly afraid that I am responsible for all this," Jack whispered to Harry.

"I don't see how you figure that out."

"Why, if I had but kept faith with Ahmed, in all probability he would have kept away from Burapore."

"There is something in that, perhaps. Where is Mole?"

"Blest if I know."

Just then Mr. Bodwin came hurrying in from another room.

"We can't hope to hold out long," he said.

"Let us go up-stairs and shoot off a few dozen of them from the window," suggested Jack.

"I see no use in it," said the Resident. "It will only infuriate the mob and lead to further trouble."

"But they'll break in, sure. What worse trouble can there be than to have that happen?"

"You are free to try what you wish; I cannot even suggest."

"But we want to do the right thing."

"Here comes your friend with the wooden leg; he looks as though he had made a discovery."

It was Mole.

He came thumping down-stairs.

"Hello there!" he called. "Come up here, every one of you—quick!"

"For why?" asked Jack.

"For disguises, if you want them."

"But do we?"

"It can do no harm."

"What have you discovered?"

"A room full of native costumes."

"But our faces?"

"Can be fixed to suit with a little burnt cork."

"My word! That's not half a bad idea, don't you know," cried Jack.

So Harry and Mr. Bodwin thought.

Mole led them to the servants' quarters.

Here they disguised themselves as natives.

Jack prepared the burnt cork and their faces were made to suit.

"The worst of me is my wooden leg," groaned Mole.

"A dead give away," said Harry.

"Couldn't be worse. I fear I shall be captured. I only wish Monday was here."

A fearful crash was now heard below stairs.

They knew only too well what it meant.

For some moments now a furious assault upon the door had been going on.

It had simply yielded.

They could hear the natives pouring into the house.

"We must hide," cried Jack. "When they come into this room we must watch our chance and join them."

"Risky," said Harry, "but the only way."

The room was a large one.

There were two closets in it.

Jack got into one, and the Resident took another.

Harry hid behind a big press.

Mole stepped behind the bed which had heavy curtains.

It was all done in a moment, and none to soon either.

The natives flocked through the Residency.

They came pouring into the room at last.

Seeing no one they turned and hurried out again.

Our little party embraced the opportunity.

They hurried out after them.

They were not particularly noticed.

Most of the attacking party were too deeply under the influence of "Bang" to notice anything.

They were shouting and singing and calling to one another.

Threats against the Resident were loud and deep.

To Jack, Harry and Mole all that they said was as a sealed book. They just pushed on from room to room with the crowd.

But Mr. Bodwin understood it only too well, and trembled so that Jack, who kept near him, thought he would surely betray himself.

"Keep cool, sir," he whispered.

"I am trying my best," replied Mr. Bodwin, with chattering teeth.

By this time they had lost sight of Mole.

Oddly enough his wooden leg seemed to attract no attention.

But then Mole managed it well.

It might never have been noticed if one section of the crowd had not broken into Mr. Barclay's wine cellar.

Here casks were tapped and the necks of bottles knocked off without ceremony.

Mole happened by ill-luck to be with that particular section of the crowd.

The temptation to sample the wine and liquors of the late Resident of Burapore was altogether too strong for him.

The result was as might have been expected.

Just at the critical moment when Jack and Harry with Mr. Bodwin had succeeded in working their way to the outer door, there was a wild shout and a dozen dusky natives came up from the wine cellar hustling Mole.

The worthy professor was in a sad state.

His turban had tumbled off, revealing his true character.

He was wildly declaiming to the excited throng, reciting passages from his "Life of Moses."

"Good heavens!" breathed the Resident, "we are undone! They know him for what he is!"

"We must save him," said Jack.

But this was something impossible.

The crowd around the door grew furious.

They were hustled this way and that.

Suddenly a number of wild-eyed scythes closed around Mr. Bodwin.

"Here's another of them!" they cried. "Kill! Kill! Kill!"

Then the crowd surged into the open, carrying Jack and Harry with them.

Mole and Mr. Bodwin had now vanished.

"Kill them—kill them!" the infuriated mob yelled, as the prisoners were borne away beyond the reach of their friends.

And young Jack Harkaway and Harry Girdwood knew just enough of Hindostane to understand the meaning of the cry.

CHAPTER VII.

THE IDOL OF THE SEVEN EYES.

Long after midnight on that day—a day to be ever memorable in the history of Burapore—the uprising quieted down.

The movement had only been directed against the unpopular Resident.

These people realized only too keenly that to keep the thing up would result in bringing the heavy hand of the British Indian government down upon them, and perhaps lead to the total destruction of their city.

Consequently they restrained themselves.

Only the Residency was attacked.

The house was sacked and cleaned out of everything valuable. Then after scenes of wild debauchery, the mob dispersed and quiet began to settle down upon Burapore. But it is safe to say no one slept that night. Certainly the worthy Nourad did not.

In self defense he had been forced to join the crowd, for he would have permanently lost caste with his fellow citizens if he had refused.

But his heart was not in the riot, and he took the earliest opportunity to separate himself from the drunken mob, and wend his way to his own shop.

The street seemed deserted when he first neared the place. But when he looked again he saw two men in native dress standing in front of his door.

They were looking up at the windows. Nourad watched them as he walked. Presently he saw one of the men knock softly upon the door. Nourad hurried up behind them. "What is wanted?" he demanded.

Now the two strangers were none other than young Jack Harkaway and Harry Girdwood.

Nourad's sharp eyes penetrated their disguise in part. He knew them to be white men.

But further than this he did not know.

"What would you, sahib?" he demanded, salaaming before Jack.

"If you seek Nourad, I am he?"

"Why do you call me sahib?" asked Jack.

"Nourad is no fool."

"You penetrate my disguise?"

"Assuredly; you do well to go disguised, though. It is a bad night for Englishmen to be abroad in Burapore."

"You speak the truth," replied Jack, pressing a sovereign into the man's hand.

"What is this for, sahib?"

"For information which I think you can give us."

"Possibly. I know your voice now. You are from the Residency. We have met before."

"We have."

"Your lives are in great danger!"

"I know it."

"But I know more than you know. Ahmed, my son, seeks you everywhere; but enter. This is the last place in which he will look. You are quite safe here."

Jack and Harry passed into the old Howadji's shop, and the door was securely closed.

"Nourad," said Jack, "this thing is all wrong! It should not be!"

"The sahib speaks the truth!"

"You are an honest man; tell us what they have done with the new Resident, Mr. Bodwin? Is he dead?"

"No, sahib. He is not dead, but they will kill him! He was captured in disguise!"

"I know. They know him, then?"

"Certainly."

"There was another captured at the time."

"Yes; the sahib with the wooden leg."

"Exactly; where are they now?"

"In the forest in the hands of the mob, led by my son and the remainder of his band of Dacoits. It breaks my heart to make this confession, sahib, but at a time like this the truth must be told."

"You are quite right. There is still another—my servant, Monday—a man of your own color."

"I know nothing of him."

"What is to be the fate of the other two?"

"It will be decided before morning, sahib, and it is fearful."

"Name it, good Nourad."

"They will be taken to an old Brahmin temple in the forest and offered as a sacrifice to the idol of the seven eyes."

"But I thought your people were Mohammedans, and did not do such things, Nourad?"

"It is true; but there are many idolaters among us. The Dacoits are almost all of the Brahmin faith, and although my son is not, he will still yield to their wishes. Nothing can save your friends."

"By heavens, then they must be saved!" cried Jack.

"Decidedly!" added Harry; "even if it costs us our lives!"

"Where is this old temple, Nourad?" Jack now asked.

"In the heart of the forest."

"But how far?"

"Perhaps three miles."

"You know the way?"

"Certainly."

"Perhaps you would be willing to guide us to it? I will pay you well."

"I will do it with pleasure on one condition."

"Name it."

"That you promise in no way to harm my son."

"We make the promise cheerfully."

"Still I cannot regard your going other than as foolishness. What would you do?"

"Save our friends."

"It will be impossible."

"But why?"

"There will be a thousand men at the temple."

"Still we must try."

Nourad smiled.

"I like you, sahib," he said. "I admire your perseverance. I will tell you a secret. There is a way."

"I thought so!" cried Jack; "it was the hand of Providence which guided us to your door. Tell us the secret, good Nourad, and I will pay you well."

"No; I will not tell you now; but if the sahibs desire I will go to the temple with you. I know it since my boyhood. In those days Brahmin priests still inhabited it, and it is from them that I learned its secrets; but it is wholly deserted now."

Jack saw the importance of winning this good man's favor more fully.

He drew out his purse and paid him a handsome sum in gold.

"We are in your hands, Nourad," he said. "When shall we start?"

"Now; but may I make a suggestion?"

"Certainly."

"The disguise of the sahibs is easily seen through; the wonder is, you were not captured with your friends."

"Would you suggest another?"

"No; but let me work over you a little."

"As you will."

"Anything to make matters sure," added Harry. "Jack, I really begin to feel some hope."

"Oh, I fancy it will turn out all right," said Jack. "We are constantly getting into these scrapes, you know; but somehow we always contrive to get out of them again."

Nourad now retired to a rear room.

He soon reappeared with a box which he proceeded to open.

Taking out a bottle, he applied a sweet smelling wash to Jack and Harry's faces, having first carefully removed the burnt cork.

The result was to give them a skin exactly the shade of his own.

He then gave them certain articles of dress to exchange for the ones they had on.

The result was all that could be desired.

Jack and Harry now felt quite secure in their disguise.

After partaking of light refreshments, pressed upon them by Nourad, they were conducted to a grove of banyan trees in the outskirts of the city.

Here such of the rioters who still held together were encamped.

Among them were many of the police.

It was a noisy, drunken crowd, but, thanks to Nourad's disguise, Jack and Harry moved among them freely.

They soon learned that the prisoners were concealed in a certain tent.

Besides Mr. Bodwin and Mole, there were several other of the English residents of Burapore, Dr. McNamara being among the rest.

Ahmed, however, was not in the camp.

It was rumored that he had gone on to the Brahmin temple with his Dacoit followers.

That Ahmed had joined the Thugs even his father did not know.

But such was the case, and the leader of the Dacoits was more than ever ready to kill.

To make any move toward the rescue of the prisoners in the tent, would have been mere madness.

Neither Jack nor Harry attempted it; indeed, lest they should arouse suspicion of their true character, they kept as far away from the tent as possible.

Nourad now separated himself from them.

His idea was to learn all the particulars he could of the plans of the mob.

At last he approached Jack and made a sign for him to follow.

"Well, and what have you found out?" Jack demanded, when they were at a safe distance away.

"They will move forward to the Brahmin temple within an hour, sahib. Their idea is to be there by daylight."

"Cannot we push on ahead?"

"Such is my plan."

"Suppose we go now?"

"The very thing I was about to suggest."

"Have you learned anything definite of our friends?"

"Yes, sahib; they are in the tent."

"You have seen them?"

"I have."

"But how did you contrive to gain admission?"

"I am known as Ahmed's father. These men would not refuse me."

"Were they well and reasonably comfortable?"

"The Resident seemed to be in a low state of mind, sahib. Your friend with the wooden leg was sound asleep."

"Drunk, as usual, I suppose," thought Jack. "Well, he does not realize his danger, and before it comes to the worst I shall have saved him, please God."

"Had we better not start now?" asked Harry.

"Decidedly, if Nourad is ready," Jack replied.

Nourad was quite ready, and they stole away from the camp, never being observed, although the case might have been just the reverse, had the rioters been in full possession of their wits.

Nourad led them unerringly through the forest to the ancient Brahmin shrine of the idol of seven eyes.

This was a vast pile of buildings, situated in the very depths of the forest.

No doubt an extensive city once occupied the ground where the forest stood.

But of this there was now no trace, save the temple itself.

The buildings rose to a vast height, and although in an extremely

dilapidated condition, still retained enough of their original ornamentation to show how beautiful they once had been.

"This is really a most remarkable place, Nourad," exclaimed Harry Girdwood, as he and Young Jack Harkaway surveyed the ruined pile.

"It is indeed," said Jack. "I would greatly like to take a series of photographs here that we might send them home to our wives."

"We have something of far greater importance than making photographs on hand just at present, dear boy."

"Quite so, and we must be about it. Come, Nourad, show us your idol with seven eyes."

Nourad led the way into the temple.

The idol stood at the rear of the main building.

It represented a man with three huge heads sitting cross legged on a pedestal.

The heads had enormous mouths, and those on the sides were provided with three eyes each, two in the usual places, one in the forehead.

The central head, however, had but one eye, and its mouth was surprisingly large.

"Once these eyes were diamonds," said Nourad. "What you now see are only the holes where the gems have been."

"Pity they weren't left for us," said Harry, "but now, Nourad, what is your secret? Disclose it."

"Never!" cried a voice.

A scys sprang out from behind the idol.

With a crooked scimiter which he held, he aimed a blow at Nourad. The Howadji dodged.

Then the man rushed for Jack.

Harry flung up his rifle.

So did Jack.

But neither had a chance to fire.

Before they could do so a second native rushed out from behind the idol.

He was armed with nothing but his fists, but with these he dealt the scys a blow in the back of the head which knocked him senseless.

"Hi, yah! You will go for Mast' Jack, will yer?" he cried. "I'll larn yer—so!"

"Monday," exclaimed Jack, recognizing his faithful servant.

"Was there ever such a surprise?" echoed Harry. "Monday, where in the world have you been?"

"Got caught with them fellers, Mast' Harry. Had to jine 'em or dey'd killed me—would suah!"

Monday explained in detail after Nourad had tied the scys hand and foot and dragged him into the forest.

"Dey cotched me in de market place," he said. "Dere wasn't nuffin' for it but to go; but I could have got free when dey attacked the Residency, only I didn't see nuffin' of you two, and I did see Mistah Mole lugged off; so I just made up my mind you could look after yer ownselfes, an' I'd look after Mistah Mole."

"Right," said Jack; "but what are you doing here?"

"Perhaps you don't know Mistah Mole is to be brung heah 'long with the Resident an' sacrificed to that ugly snoozer up there with the three heads?"

"Oh, yes, we do; that's why we are here," said Jack.

"Well, then, that's why I'm here, too."

"Explain, Monday."

"Why, you see, it is a regular roast, this sacrifice business."

"Good heavens! They are not going to burn old Mole, are they?" cried Harry.

"Not at all. They offer him to the idol, which is supposed to swallow him."

"Oh, indeed!"

"Yes. But really, Mast' Harry, a little door opens, and the victim passes inside the idol."

"What becomes of him then?"

"Well, I don't know how it used to be when this temple was running full blast, but just now that fellow what I knocked out an' me was sent up here to receive them. I understand they are to be sent up to Afghanistan and sold as slaves."

"Indeed! A pretty programme!" cried Jack. "Then the idol is hollow, is it?"

"It is. Let me show you."

And Monday conducted them around behind the ugly image, and then inside of it; showed them the trap behind the huge central mouth, and also a secret way out of the temple into the forest.

"A beautiful arrangement!" cried Jack. "But here is Nourad. Nourad, we know your secret now!"

"I see you do, sahib, and it is well," replied the Howadji, "for the crowd is close to the temple now."

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"In that case we had better remain where we are," said Jack.

"But suppose some of those wretches come in here to see if all is right?" objected Harry.

"They won't," said Monday; "I have orders to give them a certain signal. We can get Mr. Mole and make right off."

"Oh, but we want the Resident," said Jack; "and there's Dr. McNamara, too."

"Peace!" breathed Nourad. "They are here now!"

There was indeed no time for further talk.

The mob was already flocking into the temple.

They little dreamed that the priest sent to aid in the ceremony was not inside the idol, for Monday, who was to act as his assistant, pulled a string which caused the idol to utter certain discordant sounds.

Then the deluded idolaters fell on their faces and grovelled before the shrine.

The Mohammedans in the crowd looked on and laughed, but they had no idea of making any effort to save the lives of the victims.

Two priests now stepped up before the altar which was directly beneath the big, central mouth of the idol.

One delivered a long harangue, of which Jack, Harry and Monday could not understand a word.

Then poor old Mole was forced to hobble up beside him.

The professor was very pale, but seemed calm.

True to his character, he had no idea of dying without a last word.

"This is an outrage—an infernal outrage!" he shouted. "I am a British subject. I'll have the law on you! I'll send a regiment to—good Lord! Jack! Harry! Monday! Well, well!"

Now the first part of the professor's speech was delivered before the altar on the outside of the idol, the last was spoken within.

For the priests caught Mole and tossed him into the idol's mouth.

To the utter astonishment of the worthy author of the *Life of Moses* he found himself in the hands of his friends.

"Hush! Hush! Don't speak a word as you value your life!" breathed Jack. "Remember there are others."

They continued to watch through the peephole in the idol, as many a wily heathen priest had doubtless done in days gone by.

Dr. McNamara was the next victim.

He never said a word.

Pale, but determined, he stood before the idol.

Then he was seized and thrown head first into that huge cavernous mouth.

No doubt he thought his last hour had come.

His surprise was just as great as Mole's, when he found himself in the hands of friends.

It was Mr. Bodwin's turn next.

The Resident came through flying, and was caught by Monday and Jack.

"Good gracious!" gasped Mole, "this is really very remarkable. Such wretched nonsense, too! The worship of the golden calf in the wilderness, for which Moses—"

"Let up on Moses!" cried Jack. "Follow me, Mole, and you, too, friends. There is not an instant to be lost!"

They were buried through a secret passage by Nourad, and were buried in the depths of the forest in no time.

None too soon either, for the priests hurried into the idol.

Fearful was their rage upon discovering that their victims had escaped.

Then there was a great search made for them, which came to nothing.

For Nourad conducted them safely back to Burapore, where, to Mr. Bodwin's great joy, he found a regiment of soldiers, sent up from Delhi, in full possession of the town.

Thus it was safe for them to return to the Residency.

Nourad was well rewarded, and the mob never knew by whom they had been betrayed.

Naturally Mr. Bodwin was very grateful.

"Consider my house your home as long as you and your friends wish to remain in Burapore," he said to Jack.

But Jack took the affair very coolly.

"We came up here to hunt tigers," he said, "but one kind of sport is as good as another, perhaps. I must say I enjoyed the excitement of stealing a march on those priests of the Idol of Seven Eyes."

And so the whole affair ended, and was soon forgotten in the excitement of succeeding adventures, even more startling than those experienced by YOUNG JACK HARKAWAY IN THE LAND OF TIGERS.

[THE END.]

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